

Relationships with Children Policy

[Philosophy; Interactions with Children; Group Relationships; Behaviour Management; Inclusion; Supporting Children through Difficult Situations; Bullying and Biting]

NQS

QA5	5.1.1	Responsive and meaningful interactions build trusting relationships which engage and support each child to feel secure, confident and included.
	5.1.2	The dignity and the rights of every child are maintained.
	5.2.1	Children are supported to collaborate, learn from and help each other.
	5.2.1	Each child is supported to work with, learn from and help others through collaborative learning opportunities.
	5.2.2	Each child is supported to regulate their own behaviour, respond appropriately to the behaviour of others and communicate effectively to resolve conflicts.

National Regulations

Regs	155	Interactions with children
	156	Relationships in groups

EYLF

LO1	Children feel safe, secure, and supported.
	Children develop their emerging autonomy, inter-dependence, resilience and sense of agency.
	Children develop knowledgeable and confident self identities.
	Children learn to interact in relation to others with care, empathy and respect.
LO2	Children develop a sense of belonging to groups and communities and an understanding of the reciprocal rights and responsibilities necessary for active community participation.
	Children respond to diversity with respect.
	Children become aware of fairness.
	Children become socially responsible and show respect for the environment.

Aim

Noarlunga Community Children's Centre aims to ensure that all educators form meaningful and

secure relationships with children that make them feel safe and supported in the service. Educators will encourage positive relationships between children, their peers and educators of the service.

Related Policies

Special Rights Policy
Continuity of Education and Care Policy
Enrolment Policy
Orientation for Children Policy
Physical Activity Promotion Policy

Implementation

Interactions with Children

Our Service's statement of **Philosophy** will guide our interactions with children as follows:

Interactions

Our educators prioritise the development of positive and secure attachments with all children and families within our service. To achieve this, we strive to provide regular and consistent educators and a predictable care environment.

All educators will endeavour to promote children's practical life skills through daily routines and practices, promoting a sense of agency through giving children space and time to make their own choices.

'Children have agency. They have capacities and rights to initiate and lead learning and be active participants and decision makers in matters affecting them' (DEEWR 2010, p. 14).

Equity and fairness

Educators acknowledge the uniqueness and potential of all children and work to ensure that each child's individual culture, strengths, interests and ways of being are valued. Our educators encourage and support children to challenge perceptions of stereotypes based on religion, gender, race, language, ability and age.

We promote a sense of acceptance and respect for all within our service community.

We acknowledge the rich and complex histories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and strive to build respectful connections with local Kaurna individuals and groups, to better understand their sense of country and strengthen their identities within our community.

'The rights and best interests of the child are paramount' (ACECQA 2011, p. 10).

Relationships

We develop trusting and professional relationships with the children, families, and staff based on open and honest communication and information sharing to achieve a strong sense of belonging for all.

As a Community Children's Centre, we encourage and promote links between children, their families and local services and organisations. These collaborative partnerships are sought by our educators to ensure continual improvement of pedagogical practices and to ensure the best outcomes for children and families.

'Families are children's first and most influential educators' (DEEWR 2009, p. 5).

Physical environment

The environment is a vibrant, welcoming, stimulating, aesthetically pleasing and a safe place where children's ideas and interests contribute to the physical resources on offer. We encourage children to accept challenges and take risks, to gain the developmental benefits of adventurous play within their capabilities.

Educators support children to make choices in their play and have access to a variety of

learning spaces both indoors and outdoors.

Educators place preference over natural, recycled and open-ended resources within the learning environments. We promote and role model Education for Sustainability in our environments through intentional teaching to develop respect, care and an understanding of our natural and built world.

'Outdoor learning spaces are a feature of Australian learning environments' (DEEWR 2009, p. 15).

Learning through play

Children's learning is a holistic process. It occurs through rich play based experiences that are a combination of child led and adult guided opportunities. Educators support children in this process by tuning into teachable moments to scaffold children's learning as they explore and discover their world.

Educators believe in every child's capacity to succeed as capable and competent learners and take a strengths based approach to planning experiences that promote children's growth in all developmental domains. Educators use regular critical reflection as a tool to guide their planning and everyday practices.

'Learning is dynamic, complex and holistic' (DEEWR 2010, p. 14).

Sources

Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority 2011, *National Quality Framework Resource Kit: Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011*, Sydney.

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations for the Council of Australian Governments 2009, *Belonging, Being & Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia*, Canberra.

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations for the Council of Australian Governments 2010, *Educators Belonging, Being & Becoming: Educators Guide to the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia*, Canberra.

In order to maintain positive interactions with children our service and educators will maintain the following:

- Our service will provide a relaxed and positive atmosphere for all children.
- Our service will endeavour to make mealtimes a calm and flexible experience to suit the needs of all children. Educators will take advantage of this time to sit and talk with children.
- Our educators will listen actively to children initiating conversations about their experiences inside and outside of the service as well as what is happening around them in the moment. Educators will share in humour with children and support them to express their ideas and feelings and be responsive and encouraging as children seek assistance in taking on new challenges, developing their emerging autonomy and sense of agency.
- Our educators and coordinators will respond sensitively and appropriately to children's efforts to communicate and engage them in meaningful, open ended conversations about their interests in a positive manner.
- Educators will use strategies to support children in expressing themselves in ways appropriate to the individual child and allow children to understand that they are valued and respected members of the service's community.
- Our service will endeavour to make personal-care routines an enjoyable experience for all children.

- Educators will respond to verbal and facial expressions of babies and toddlers when they practice their verbal communication skills during these personal-care routines.
- Our routines, as well as planned and spontaneous experiences will be organised to maximise opportunity for meaningful conversations between children and educators and the service will ensure that all children have equal opportunity to engage in one to one and small group interactions with educators.
- Our educators will be knowledgeable in the communication strategies and nonverbal cues of babies and toddlers and staffing and grouping arrangements within the service will support the development of trusting relationships between educators, babies and toddlers to allow them to feel secure in the service.
- Our statement of philosophy and policy on interactions with children will be visible
- Our educators will participate in children's play using children's cues to guide their level and type of involvement. Educators will always maintain a positive approach when responding to children and offering assistance, ensuring they provide children with the time and space to practice communication skills with their peers for collaborating, negotiating, co-operating and persisting.
- Our educators will model reasoning, prediction and reflection processes and language when communicating with each other.
- Our educators will collaborate with children about routines and experiences and welcome child participation when preparing settings eg: lunch tables, sleep environments
- Our educators will use techniques such as sign language and other resources and tools to support children with special rights and to expose all children to the diverse ways of being and communicating within society.
- Our educators will engage in conversational communication by adding to interactions initiated by babies and toddlers by describing objects and talking about routine activities with babies and toddlers.
- Our educators will use their interactions with children to support the maintenance of home languages and learning English as an additional language.
- Our educators and coordinators will use information from their observations of interactions with children to extend the children's thinking and learning.
- Our educators focus on the Circle of Security to build secure attachments with one and then more educators. Educators will draw on their knowledge and training of the Circle of Security model to build trusting and secure relationships with children and to support families in their secure attachments with their children. Some children may suffer a form of separation anxiety when away from their families. Educators will work closely and sensitively with the family in order to allow their child to feel safe, secure, supported and valued at the service.
- Our service will ensure that there are many opportunities for babies and toddlers to experience relaxed physical contact and close interactions with familiar educators.
- Our nominated supervisor, leadership group and educators will strive to build knowledge and an understanding of the histories, cultures, languages, traditions, child rearing practices and lifestyle choices of families using the service and show genuine value and appreciation for the diversity that our families bring to the service.
- Our educators will frequently talk with families to build an understanding of the non-verbal forms of communication used by their children in order to convey messages and individual needs such as hunger, personal hygiene and tiredness.

- Our educators will take the time to have authentic and meaningful conversations with parents about their children, to bridge the gap between home and care.
- Our service will implement strategies to assist all children to develop a sense of belonging and confidence through positive interactions between the children and educators.
- Our service's roster will be planned in a way that promotes continuity for children.
- Our service will gather information from families during the enrolment and transition process in order to be able to provide support for children during the settling in process.
- When children have special rights, our service, in partnership with families, will consult with other professionals and support agencies that work with children to gather information that will guide our interactions with these children. This information will be recorded in a respectful manner and stored in the child's file.
- Our service's approach to equity and inclusion will be documented in our statement of philosophy.
- Educators will be critically reflective in everyday practices and documentation. Our service will use the Early Years Learning Framework to lead curriculum decision making with an ongoing cycle of information gathering, questioning, planning, sharing and reflection.

Group Relationships

In order to encourage respectful and positive relationships between children, their peers and educators our service will adhere to the following practices:

- Our service will encourage and support children to participate in a variety of interactions with their peers, to respond positively to ideas, to negotiate roles and relationships, to contribute to shared play, and to develop friendships.
- Our educators will engage children in ongoing group projects that involve inquiry, research, planning, problem solving and shared decision making.
- Our educators will model positive strategies for children to initiate interactions and participate in group play and social activities and assist them when they have trouble understanding or communicating with each other.
- Our educators will plan for and offer experiences that allow for and promote peer scaffolding.
- Our educators will promote a sense of community throughout the service.
- Our service will coordinate the staffing and grouping arrangements to support positive relationships between children.
- Our educators will support and promote children's interpersonal relationships and support the inclusion of children from diverse backgrounds and capabilities in group play, projects and experiences by critically considering whose voices and perspectives are being valued in the planning and implementation of experiences.
- Our educators will learn about children's shared interests and will use this information to plan further experiences that provide collaborative learning opportunities.
- Our educators will preempt potential conflicts or challenging behaviours by monitoring children's play and supporting interactions where there is conflict, using language and communication that promotes the development of skills for negotiation and cooperation.

- Our service will ensure that the program and routines of the service focus on opportunities for children to engage in social play and group experiences.
- Our service will ensure that food is never used as a reward or punishment.

Behaviour Guidance

Positive Behaviour

Educators, staff, students and volunteers will model positive behaviour and guide children's behaviour in ways that promote their self esteem by:

- encouraging children to be cooperative and helpful, to express their feelings and responses to others' behaviour confidently and constructively, and to respectfully guide the behaviour of other children when required.
- supporting children to explore different identities and points of view, to negotiate their rights and the rights of others in a positive, respectful way and to communicate effectively when resolving disagreements
- discussing emotions and issues of inclusion and exclusion, fairness and bias
- encouraging children to listen to other children's ideas, consider alternate behaviour and co-operate to solve problems
- using positive language, gestures, facial expressions and tone of voice when redirecting or discussing children's behaviour with them, and remaining calm, gentle, patient and reassuring even when children strongly express distress, frustration or anger
- using their knowledge of children's personalities and friendships to help them manage their own behaviour and develop empathy
- using information from families about their children's social skills and relationship preferences to engage children in experiences that support their social development
- speaking in comforting tones and holding babies to soothe them when they are distressed, and responding positively to babies' and toddlers' exploratory behaviour
- intervening sensitively when children have difficulty resolving a disagreement, and helping them remove themselves from situations where they are experiencing frustration, anger or fear
- interacting with children and teaching them how to play in different ways: through movement play, object play (understanding and solving problems), imaginative play (emotional resilience, creativity and empathy), social play (friendship and belonging, rough and tumble play, celebrations and ritual play), storytelling (my world, myself and where I fit in), creative play (new behaviours and thoughts).
- promoting children's agency by allowing them to be as independent as possible, to try things they see for themselves and experience the positive or negative consequences of their actions while considering the risk or benefit to others.
- recognising and valuing each child's involvement in learning, while providing learning environments that are flexible and open ended.
- setting up rooms and environments to foster positive behaviour eg room is appropriately stimulating but not cluttered, walkways are defined and clear of obstacles, resources are displayed in inviting and aesthetically pleasing ways.
- ensuring experiences and provocations are of interest to children and stimulate development and promote meaningful engagement.

- supporting children to manage their feelings by identifying, recognising and naming their raw emotions eg anger, fear, panic and being patient when children revert to familiar behaviour if they are stressed, tired, hungry etc. This includes listening empathetically to children when they express their emotions and reassuring them that it is normal to experience positive and negative emotions
- ensuring children's basic needs are met eg hunger, tiredness, comfort
- supporting children who appear to be insecurely attached by sensitively building genuine and positive relationships with the child and family
- allowing children to have uninterrupted play where they can continue their engagement in learning as they explore and improvise and not interrupting a child who is actively engaged in an activity, or forcing a child to share when they are engaged with a resource. Simple strategies may be reducing unnecessary transitions and providing progressive mealtimes.
- providing explicit instruction for routines and learning
- understanding that children's comprehension of vocabulary concepts or instructions may require support such as visuals, key word signing, two step instructions or allowing time for a child to process the instruction or information.
- Incorporating language that promotes all children's right to play while minimising possible frustration or stress.

Inappropriate Behaviour

Educators and staff understand that inappropriate behaviour may be a child's way of saying they need support. Educators will reflect on the reasons for the child's behaviour and develop strategies or a plan with the Nominated Supervisor which can be implemented by all educators to ensure consistent responses to the child's behaviour at the service.

Children's behaviour may be inappropriate for a variety of reasons. Some of these include:

- insecure attachment to educators or families
- requiring additional support in emotional and social development
- insufficient language skills to express their needs and wishes
- experiences with trauma resulting in fight or flight responses to certain situations
- condition or number of toys, resources and equipment
- a diagnosed or undiagnosed spectrum disorder

Depending on the reason for the behaviour, some strategies for dealing with inappropriate behaviour may include:

- ignoring the negative behaviour and acknowledging the positive behaviour (while ensuring the safety of all children), and ensuring all body language is consistent with actions and words
- building strong social bonds through a focus on attachment theory and Circle of Security approaches
- using keywords with signing and objects or visuals to help children with communication difficulties
- using minimal steps in directions then allowing time for a child to understand eg 3-5 seconds
- using terminology that children understand such as 'my turn' 'your turn' rather than assuming children understand eg children may not understand what it means to "share" or that saying "sorry" does not mean they can repeat the behaviour

- allowing children to develop their reasoning and emotional knowledge by helping them to reflect on their actions through supportive and open ended questioning
- not telling a child to do something but asking the child a question eg “What do we have to do so we can have lunch,” rather than “pack up”
- talking with children about the consequences of their actions, our rules and why we have them
- providing sufficient opportunities for exercise including running which can calm anxious or agitated children through the production of certain brain chemicals
- intentionally teaching behaviours like walking inside, never assuming children know how to do things or behave, and reaffirming those and other positive behaviours
- using empathy and putting themselves in the child’s position to try and understand where the behaviour came from
- documenting incidents of inappropriate behaviour and when they are occurring communicating and liaising with parents and if relevant other professionals.
- appointing one person (eg Nominated Supervisor, Team Leader) as a contact point for parents

Educators will not isolate, intimidate or subject children to physical punishment to guide behaviour.

Parents will be encouraged to:

- work in partnership with educators where concerns are raised about the behaviour of their child
- consent in writing where educators believe liaising with relevant professionals to support the learning and development of their child and apply for funding to do this where necessary
- agree to work with educators to minimise risk where the child’s behaviour is a danger to children and educators. This may include seeking professional support from, for example a paediatrician, speech pathologist or family support services, or reducing the hours of care until the child’s behaviour is supported and risk to others is minimised.

Inclusion

Australia is a diverse country regardless of specific regional variations in cultural profiles. In order to reduce bias and ensure that no child is excluded our service will abide by the following practices:

- Our service will promote and value cultural diversity and equity for all children, families and educators from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds;
- Our service will recognise that children and adults from all cultures have similar needs and that each person is unique and valuable;
- Our service will develop a positive self concept for each child and adult in the group by exploring the cultural backgrounds of each family and child;
- Our service will endeavour to provide a foundation that instills in each child a sense of self identity, dignity and tolerance for all people;

- Our service will increase the knowledge and understanding each child has about his or her own cultural ethnic heritage in partnership with their families, educators and community and other children in the Service;
- Our service will explore family compositions, customs and lifestyles of children and families in many cultures;
- Our service will provide support for all children to develop a sense of heritage and belonging;
- Our service will recognise and celebrate individual differences within cultural and ethnic groups;
- Our service will assist wherever possible families who are new to Australia with a transition to a new and different culture.
- Our educators will become aware of their own beliefs, attitudes, cultural backgrounds, their relationship with the larger society and their attitudes to people;
- Our educators will acknowledge that they too have been influenced by their own background prejudices and their points of view;
- Our educators will accept that all children can learn and that differences in lifestyles and languages does not mean ignorance;
- Our educators will be encouraged to investigate and share their own cultural and ethnic group awareness and help children to understand themselves in relation to their family, community and other cultures;
- Our educators will be actively involved in the development of appropriate resources, support and implement an anti bias, cross cultural program throughout the Service environment which is reflective of all families/children and the diversity present in Australian society and network with community agencies involved with cross cultural issues wherever possible;
- Our educators will be actively involved with children, showing respect, sharing ideas and experiences and asking questions.
- Our educators will design a program that supports the delivery of anti bias concepts.
- Our educators will reflect on the service's philosophy and ensure that practices and attitudes concur with the philosophy.
- Our educators will work with families to encourage positive attitudes to diversity and an anti-bias ethos.
- Our educators will ensure that casual workers or visitors to the service are aware of these practices and respect these values.
- Children will listen to music and songs and practice singing songs in different languages;
- Children will learn words and phrases in a language not native to children in their group;
- Children will talk to other children using the words from their culture;
- Children will be encouraged to become independent wherever possible and be actively involved with their peers.
- Children will explore with foods from other cultures (egg. have family members from different home cultures come in and cook, to have "food tasting" parties);
- Our service will encourage children to bring in real objects and artifacts used by their families that may be historical or typical of that child's/family's cultural group
- Our service will help children to develop ease with and have a respect for physical, racial, religious and cultural beliefs and differences

- Our service will encourage children to develop autonomy, independence, competency, confidence and pride.
- Our service will provide all children with accurate and appropriate material that provides information about their own and other's disabilities and cultures.
- Our service will not isolate a child for any reason other than illness, accident or a pre arranged appointment with parental consent.

Supporting Children through Difficult Situations

When a child, family, educator or the service as a whole experiences a stressful or traumatic situation such as a bushfire, car accident, sudden illness or death, crime or violent situation it is important to provide appropriate support so they can recover from the ordeal. A child's reaction to a stressful or traumatic situation will depend on factors such as their age, stage of development and impact of the event on people around them. A child may react in ways that you don't expect and sometimes will act normally at first but be wary of a delayed reaction. Some reactions include:

- Physical symptoms such as stomach aches and headaches.
- Being anxious or clingy.
- Suffering from separation anxiety.
- Having sleeping problems or nightmares.
- Re-living the experience through drawing or play.
- Losing interest in activities.
- Loss of self-confidence.
- Regressing to "babyish" activities.

Our educators will talk with a child about the event to bring any issues out into the open. The ways our educators will approach this are:

- Reassuring the child that they are safe, but only if they really are.
- Talking to the child about what happened in a way that they will understand and without going into frightening or graphic detail. Our educators will not leave out important information though, as children will fill in the gaps.
- Some children will think they are to blame in a tragic event; our educators will make sure they know this isn't so.
- Talking about the event with appropriate people (for example, all children if the event has affected the whole service or the children that have been affected) and letting everyone have their say including children.
- Talking to the children about how people react to stressful or traumatic situations and that the feelings they are feelings are normal.

Coping Mechanisms

Some strategies that our educators will use to help children cope in these situations are:

- Giving children a sense of control of their environment and life. Letting the child make minor decisions, such as what to eat for lunch, what to wear or what toy to play with will make the child feel more in control.
- Allowing the children plenty of time to play and to do physical exercise; this will help the child burn off stress chemicals and allow for more sleep.
- Helping the children physically relax with opportunity of story time and creating calming environments.

It is important to remember how you respond to the stressful or traumatic event will affect your child's response. Children look to their families and educators to find ways to deal with a situation they probably don't understand. Children need their family members (and other adults who are close to them) to help them understand the situation and their emotions and also offer comfort and support. If adults are distressed about a situation it is important for them to seek help for themselves.

At the service, we wish to help in whatever way we can if your family has undergone a tragedy. Talk to educators (or confidentially to the Nominated Supervisor) and we will endeavour to work with families and children to support all parties through the situation.

Should it be required, educators will liaise with appropriate authorities, such as the Department for Education and Child Development, and follow any recommendations made by these authorities.

Bullying

In order to overcome bullying in our service, our educators will be aware of the following information and maintain the following practices:

Our educators will be aware of the following characteristics in children who bully -

- Children of all backgrounds can bully
- Preconceived notions of children who bully should be avoided
- The child who bullies may also be the victim of bullying
- The child who bullies will often think that they are innocent, and that the child being bullied is somehow deserving of this negative experience.
- Recent research demonstrates that aggressive behaviour and bullying inclinations begin in some children as early as two years old, which highlights the importance of children's services educators in effectively responding to children who bully.

Our educators will be aware of the following characteristics of victims of bullying -

- Children of all backgrounds can fall victim to bullying
- Preconceived notions of children who fall victim to bullying should be avoided
- Victims may have low self-esteem, lack of confidence, lack social skills or be viewed as unpopular.
- It is important to remember that victims are often sensitive and easily hurt, and feel incapable of preventing such negative experiences.

Our educators will implement the following strategies to overcome bullying -

- Our educators will practice all-encompassing and socially inclusive care.
- Daily programs will recognise, value and reflect the social and cultural diversity of our community.
- Our educators will role model and actively encourage appropriate behaviours.

- Our educators will form a close relationship with family members in order to work cooperatively to overcome instances of bullying.
- Our educators will empower children by giving them responsibilities that will make them feel valued.
- Our educators will help children deal with their anger. This includes offering alternative dispute resolution techniques that are socially acceptable.
- Our educators will seek the support of children's services professionals when it is necessary.
- Our educators will respond promptly to children's aggressive or bullying behaviour.

Biting

All individuals involved in the care of a child need to recognise that at times, some children, for a variety of reasons, attempt to bite other children.

Some reasons a child may bite are:

- Infants – Experimental, Sensory Pleasure, Teething
- Toddlers – Frustration, fatigue, attention seeking, confined spaces and limited language
- Older Children – Aggression, deliberate.

In the event of a biting incident, educators will abide by the following procedure:

- Check for broken skin.
- Clean all bites, regardless of whether the skin is broken or not.
- Apply a cold compress to the bitten area
- Our educators will communicate the incident to the families of the child that has been bitten through an accident report form and or through a phone call if deemed necessary. Families are then responsible for any follow up medical treatment.
- If the biter is a known infectious disease carrier, or can be seen to have facial herpes and the victim's skin is broken, the Nominated Supervisor or Authorised Supervisor will convey this information to the family.
- Should the behaviour continue, our educators will work in conjunction with families and, if necessary, external agencies, to develop a Behaviour Guidance plan for the child who is biting.
- Monitor the behaviour of the child who has bitten and use distraction techniques to prevent the child reaching the point where the child feels the need to bite.

Sources

**National Quality Standard
Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
Early Years Learning Framework**

Review

The policy will be reviewed annually.

Review will be conducted by:

- Management, Employees, Families and Interested Parties

Reviewed: January 2018; August 2019: August 2020 June 2021

Date for next review June 2022